THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) among various factors, FIBO has cited operational problems like truck operator stricke and delay in fixation of DEPB rates as reasons for slump in exports by 10.8% in the month April, 1997.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The DEPB rates have already been notified for as many as 1492 entries in the Standard Input Output Norms (SION) where value addition norms were available, thus covering practically all the entries where SION with value addition norms exists.

Agreement between STC and Gujarat for export of Salt and Minerals

1447. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any agreement has been signed between the State Trading Corporation and Government of Gujarat regarding export of salt and minerals during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the value of items exported;

(c) whether STC has drawn any action plan to promote the export of items manufactured in the State:

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether it has been considered to send a team of experts from the STC to Gujarat to encourage the small and enterprising exporters in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (c) STC generally does not enter into agreements with the State Governments for promotion of exports from the concerned State. In Gujarat, STC has offices in Ahmedabad and Kandla which handle exports of various items from the State as also from other regions. The items currently being exported by STC from Gujarat includes castor oilseeds, HPS Groundnut, Chemicals & Drugs and miscellaneous agro products. For exports of these items, STC enters into requisite contracts with the suppliers concerned from time to time. STC do not propose to mount any special team to Gujarat.

Pending Cases of Provisional Assessment of Excise Duty

1448. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of cases of provisional assessment involving excise duty to the tune of Rs. 2,080 crore have been pending finalisation for the last 2-3 years while some have been pending for over 10 years;

(b) if so, the reasons for the delay in finalising the cases; and

(c) what action does Government propose to take in this matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Making Indian Rupee acceptable in Sri Lanka

1449. SHRI SOM PAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the report published under the caption "move to make Indian Rupee acceptable in Lanka" in the 'Hindustan Times' of 24th April, 1997 is correct;

(b) if so, whether there has been any progress in the matter; and

(c) what advantages are supposed to be derived from this measure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In SAARC Summit in 1997 at Male, a reference was received for exploring the possibility of setting up